

Between Campus and Community: OSU and the University District, 1920-2010

A Senior Honors Thesis

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by

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## Context and Introduction

When I started this project, I talked to many people—University District residents, University officials, and others involved in the community—about the University District neighborhoods. Each was eager to show me “his or her” University District. I asked each resident “what area do you consider to be ‘your’ neighborhood?” and each person responded differently. Only one person gave the “official” University District boundaries, but even she tempered this definition with a side story about her specific street and where she takes her walks. Some understood their neighborhood with references to streets and landmarks, and others referred to smaller neighborhoods or sections within the University District. One resident started his response with the phrase, “I think about my neighborhood as a set of concentric circles.”

I had to remind myself that all of these people were talking about the same set of the neighborhoods. While each referred to the one University District, in reality, they discussed many different University Districts. I was introduced in each interview to a different University District. I learned the geography of “party houses” from an OSU off-campus administrator. I learned about cooperative housing patterns from one resident and about public housing history from another. While some residents referenced the “scarlet and gray” of Ohio State football game days in their images of the neighborhoods, one resident talked about the “blue and white” identifying gang members. Residents recommended a farmers’ market and coffee houses and offered to take me for drives around “their” neighborhoods. One asked me to help choose colors to paint a building (and possibly, to help paint it). Everyone gave me at least five additional people to contact (and in some cases, several people who they thought I should not contact!) <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One resident on Maynard warned me about a resident of his block: “Don’t knock on that door. He lives on one side of the duplex and has five big dogs who run wild on the other side. Last week one of them got loose and the police had to shoot it.” And a local activist said of another activist: “You can call him, but don’t give him my name or he won’t talk to you.”

This tension—between individuals’ desire to have me understand “their” University District as “the” University District and the numerous contradictory understandings of many individuals—relates to the power of mythic history. One experience as an umbrella for all experiences, one “story” with clear causation, is easier and more appealing in many ways than many different “stories” or experiences, or stories and experiences that contradict one another.

In the twentieth century, both OSU and the University District neighborhoods have experienced changes, both interconnected and (relatively) unconnected, often in the context of national and local patterns of change. It is as difficult to talk about the University District<sup>2</sup> in Columbus, Ohio as a single neighborhood as it is to discuss its neighboring institution, Ohio State, as “one university,” as its current president likes to do.<sup>3</sup> Within the official boundaries of the University District, there are numerous “neighborhoods” or “districts,” some self-defined, some recognized by state or national historic designation, and others named by bodies other than their residents.<sup>4</sup> The rhetorical umbrella of “University District” connects all these neighborhoods to the Ohio State University.

Interconnected city and university growth challenge my efforts to untangle the experiences of “town” and “gown” and to differentiate among distinct experiences. The Ohio State University, the University District neighborhoods, and Columbus have changed in the years since the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College opened in 1873 as a Morrill Act land-grant institution situated on farmland north of the Columbus city limits. Now an urban institution,

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<sup>2</sup> Please see attached maps (Maps 1, 2, and 3) of the Columbus, Ohio State, and the University District.

<sup>3</sup> In his fall 2007 speech to the OSU Faculty Council, University president Gordon Gee said, “First, let us forge one Ohio State University. Let us begin to think of ourselves as the *university*, not a collection of colleges hitched to a heating plant, or a detachment of departments connected by corridors.” Italics and underlined statement are from written speech. E. Gordon Gee, “It Is About Time... and Change,” *Faculty Council Address*, 4 October 2007. <[http://president.osu.edu/speeches/fac\\_100407.php](http://president.osu.edu/speeches/fac_100407.php)>

<sup>4</sup> For example, I have never heard a student refer to the “predominantly student neighborhood” or “student core neighborhood” as such. These designations are used by university and neighborhood associations to refer to the area, just east of High Street (and between Eleventh and Lane or Norwich Avenues), characterized by a high percentage of student renters. The students themselves, however, are more likely to say that they live, “east of High.”

Ohio State has struggled to discover and develop its roles as a neighbor and as a separate public institution within the city of Columbus. Its twentieth century experiences, growth, and development policies and the historical experiences of the University District neighborhoods are more than local issues. They are also part of national patterns of university-city relations, urban development, and neighborhood change.

As I talked to more people, gathered and organized historical data (both quantitative and qualitative), I started to “understand” the University District as a layering of many different maps and understandings juxtaposed or layered on top of one another. The differentiation seemed to cut into and across time. For example, within an individual year’s data from the city directory, the differences by street and even block were disconcerting at first. Often I needed to walk down the streets today to reassure myself that the addresses were indeed physically there, to wonder where an address labeled “rear” might have been, to see where a “new” address in 1960 or 1970 was built, or to accurately include duplexes as “multi-family.”<sup>5</sup> Not only were there multiple perceptions and experiences in the present, but on my streets and blocks there was also differentiation in the past, *within* individual years and *across* the decades I studied. In other words, there were multiple different experiences, characteristics, and patterns on different blocks in every year of my study between 1920 and 2010; there were different understandings of these changes and reactions to them; and there are different contemporary experiences and memories of the University District. Yet one Golden Age myth and chronology of change overshadows these complexities.

When I talked to present-day residents, they helped show me the differentiation in the present, and in present understandings of the past. In part, I try to show in this thesis that one predominant University District Golden Age myth and mythic chronology is complicated by the

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<sup>5</sup> And to wonder how many duplexes I missed in that count.

many smaller stories of the University District as it is and was experienced by numerous residents. Paired with university policies often hostile to or dismissive of the neighborhoods, the dramatic growth of Ohio State leads to oversimplifications about the nature and scope of Ohio State's impact upon the neighborhoods. One result is the notion that the entire neighborhood constitutes a single common experience. For example, some sections have seen physical alterations, decreased owner-occupancy, and increased density since 1920. These features are often cited as "one" predominant pattern of university-influenced neighborhood change in the University District. Yet no set of shared characteristics defines or integrates the University District neighborhoods. Some neighborhood changes are connected to university policy, growth, and influence, but others are not. In the same period, relatively unaffected by the university, other sections have experienced physical consistency, stable owner-occupancy, and stable residential density.

Different university officials and community activists have noted these changes. An attempt to understand either "the university" or "the University District"—their present qualities in the context of their historical experiences—is complicated by the perceptions and rhetoric which are the results of these multiple understandings and interpretations. In the same way, varied perspectives and layers of interpretation mark the twentieth century relationships between OSU and the University District. Many of these interpretations are different but conflicting responses to change. However, most oversimplify the District's patterns of changes and the University's role in these changes. Analysis of historical and contemporary OSU and neighborhood perspectives of the UD/OSU relationship and the University District neighborhoods reveals these myths and oversimplifications.

Just as each street experienced different twentieth century changes, OSU's twentieth century relationships, interactions, and conflicts with the neighborhoods differed. Differentiation and changes within the UD neighborhoods and the University provides a context for these different experiences. They bring up both examples of and contradictions to perceptions of university involvement in the community. As OSU continues to interact with the UD, a revised understanding of the layers of OSU/UD change and interaction is important.

### **University District Golden Age Myth and Mythic Chronology**

Present-day discourse and community memory define the University District by perceptions of what it once *was*, by the myth of a Golden Age before WWII and a "decline" or "fall" from that ideal over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the "fall" is from a state which never really existed in the terms as it is remembered today. A 2008 newspaper article illustrates the University District "Golden Age" myth and the mythic narrative of the District's "fall."<sup>7</sup> When Ann Fisher writes, "By the 1970s, the neighborhood's Bedford Falls image would be mostly replaced by the grittiness of a Pottersville that expanded to become the University District we know today," she concludes an account which outlines the major themes of a mythic University District Golden Age and its "fall."

The first sentences of her story provide a social and demographic dimension to the "Golden Age" myth. They emphasize the existence and preponderance of families with children in the University District: "In the golden days [...], there were children, real children -- not drunken, overgrown teenagers -- who played in grassy yards." Fisher continues: "Lawns were

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<sup>6</sup> In 1974, when OSU President Harold Enarson wrote to Columbus mayor Tom Moody that, "we must now face a decision to make a substantial dollar resource commitment to the University community or to let it drift along in its current decline and decay," he not only echoed a sentiment expressed as early as the 1950s and but he also foreshadowed one that continues to the present. This sense of urgency over "decline and decay" has marked University District rhetoric for so long that it has become an implicit feature of the District. The Ohio State University Archives, Harold L. Enarson Papers (RG 3/j/43/6), "University District Organization (UDO): Correspondence (Incl. Plans): 1973-74, 1976."

<sup>7</sup> Ann Fisher, "University District's old times preserved," Commentary, *Columbus Dispatch*. March 7, 2008.

trimmed, and flowers sprouted from well-turned soil around sturdy houses intended for the families who made up the OSU family -- the department heads, the professors, the staff, and even students.” The allusion to students (“drunken, overgrown teenagers”) anticipates one of the chronology’s later themes, a negative influx of student residents of the District, and sets up “students” (or households made up of multiple unrelated individuals) as a demographic replacement of “families.” The subsequent reference to the “families who made up the OSU family” both reiterates the demographic ideal and introduces a connection to Ohio State. Not only was the University District occupied mostly by families, but its relationship to Ohio State was a familial one.<sup>8</sup> Itself a “family,” Ohio State was comprised of individual families who resided in the University District. While this description does acknowledge that there were student residents of the University District (“even students”), it emphatically places them beneath the non-student residents and within physically well-maintained homes (trimmed lawns and “well-turned soil”). It ignores non-OSU affiliated residents, “families” or otherwise

The myth of the University District includes a trope and a chronology of “decline” and “fall” from the heights of its Golden Age. The physical growth of Ohio State and its huge enrollment increases after World War Two frame this narrative. Fisher reiterates this theme: “Then the changes came, [...] starting with a building boom after World War II to make room for returning GIs [...] In the mid-1960s, the campus expanded farther north, past W. Woodruff

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<sup>8</sup> The mythic story acknowledges one “positive” university connection to the University District: faculty and staff who owned homes and lived in the University District. Present-day owner-occupancy initiatives hearken back to this ideal. A vice president in the 1990s stated, “To the young professor who has a family, housing is important [...] That professor is trying to do research and get tenure, and he or she wants to be able to fall out of bed and be on campus. This is something that needs our attention.” This feature contrasts with the later “negative” influx of student renters after World War Two and the presence of students in the University District today. Quote is from Benjamin Brace, special assistant for the vice president of business and administration at OSU. The article describes university plans, “to work with the city on housing regulations and to work with landlords to upgrade housing by promising to help deliver tenants.” Calls increased homeownership “vital” to these plans. Tim Doulin, “OSU-area group studies homeownership incentives,” *Columbus Dispatch*, March 6, 1992. From The Ohio State University Archives, “Information File on University District.”

Avenue to Lane Avenue, for dorm construction.” The negative associations of the “fall” of the University District are tied to Ohio State’s influence. Increased density, decreased homeownership, multi-family housing, and increased transience all sharply contrast with the opposite, “positive” qualities of its “Golden Age”: high percentages of homeownership, residential persistence, low residential density, and the physical stability of housing stock.

As Fisher’s article illustrates these mythic associations between “positive,” and “negative,” characteristics, it further connects demographic and physical characteristics. The phrase “sturdy houses intended for the families,” relates to perceptions of “single family homes” as the District’s Golden Age norm; it also emphasizes the quality of the housing stock. These two characteristics contrast with negative associations about the later “building boom,” which created flimsy, multi-family buildings. The focus upon the flower beds and shrubbery harkens a suburban or pastoral ideal, one which early twentieth century housing advertisements also portray.<sup>9</sup> Later in the article, “grittiness,” “filth,” and “Pottersville” provide images for the perceived present condition of the neighborhood. The garden imagery contrasts with present-day University District rhetoric and imagery, which offer trash and other garbage as markers of the neighborhood and focus upon the need to “clean up” the District, even increase its foliage.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For example, a 1912 *Columbus Dispatch* article (as advertisement) entitled, “What Nature and Man Have Done for Indianola” contains the subheading: “Forest Trees and Surveyors Made Foundation for Beautiful Columbus Suburb.” Despite the reference to the University District as a suburb, this article also emphasizes the urban character of the District: “The roughness of the land, together with their appreciation of their beauty, led the original owners to spare the old forest trees, which added another characteristic feature, exceptional indeed in a *thickly populated urban district* [...] The thrushes and woodpeckers still return to their old haunts in spite of the *encircling city*.” (italics added). *Columbus Dispatch*, Local, September 22, 1912.

<sup>10</sup> Improved aesthetics are often listed as contemporary priorities for the University District, and trash collection is a frequent topic. In a 1994 newspaper article, City Councilman Matt Habash lists priorities for OSU and the University District and includes planting 900 trees, increasing trash storage container capacity, increasing bulk pickup, increasing street sweeping, and increasing enforcement of environmental laws. Alan Miller, “Habash has plan for OSU” *Columbus Dispatch*, May 13, 1994. These are not new topics. A 1973 document prepared by the newly formed University District Organization contains an extensive “Community Maintenance and Sanitation” section which suggests more trash cans, a “community code of maintenance,” and spring clean-up days. An example of its rhetoric is the hope to “effect changes in the overall appearance of the community. Such physical improvements might affect attitudes insofar as people take pride in an attractive community while a trashy,



Taken together, these perspectives associate certain neighborhood residents with gardens and others (in particular, students) with trash.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the mythic chronology connects and blurs demographic and physical characteristics and changes. The chronology and its imagery portray neighborhood residents as abstractions instead of agents.

While the chronology ignores or abstracts individual neighborhood residents, it magnifies and mythologizes Ohio State's role. The negative neighborhood changes are seen as results of University growth and influence. Images focus upon the size, power, and inaccessibility of the university. For example, in a 1973 "Social Survey," the University District Organization asked residents about the university's impact upon the community. The summary noted a popular image of the University as "a sort of uncommitted and uncoordinated giant that has taken minimum responsibility in relation to its 'overwhelming' impact on the community."<sup>12</sup> In this context, the report calls Ohio State the "face of the community" and notes the University's potential to become a "scapegoat for everything that is wrong in the University community."<sup>13</sup> According to this discourse, Ohio State was no longer a "family of families" but rather "a closed

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deteriorating environment is treated in a trashy way." "Profile of the University Community Part III" prepared by the University District Organization in April 1973. The Ohio State University Archives, Harold L. Enarson Papers (RG 3/j/43/5), "University District Organization: April 1973."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: "Tenants, landlords, and the city all must bear part of the blame. On their part, tenants frequently do not care a great deal about maintaining the property. Be they students are members of the sub-culture who will be in the community a relatively short time and who are living easy while they are here or be they Appalachians who tend to collect and store junk cars and other miscellaneous items in their yards, there are [...] very real and hard-to-change attitudes involved in the community maintenance problem." See also the recent series in the *Ohio State Lantern* (OSU student newspaper) about the University District as a "disposable neighborhood." One article from that series quotes University Area Commission president Ian McConnell, who states, "The lack of identity in the predominantly student populated core area "reduces a student's sense of place in the community, allowing for lower standards, which in turn leads to a decline in quality of life across the district." In the same article, Campus Partners staff member Steve Sterrett calls the student neighborhood "a place you could come and people didn't care didn't care too much about graffiti, it just was the way it was." Dan McKeever, "State of the District: In Search of An Identity: 'A Disposable Neighborhood,'" *The Lantern: The Student Voice of the Ohio State University*. May 26, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> "Profile of the University Community Part III" prepared by the University District Organization in April 1973. The Ohio State University Archives, Harold L. Enarson Papers (RG 3/j/43/5), "University District Organization: April 1973." (258-260)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

corporation” and “a soundproof wall”<sup>14</sup> These images replace any Golden Age ideals of the University District as separate, unconnected, or unaffected by the university. Recent interviews with residents yield similar imagery.<sup>15</sup> They also focus upon metonymical images of student residents—for example, one interviewee’s picture of a District of “grills and cornhole boards.”<sup>16</sup>

Over the same period, Ohio State’s associated rhetoric shows the complexity of university-community relations. Seeking explanations for perceived changes, responding in part to University growth and policy, some neighborhood residents tell this story of increased, negative University impact upon the neighborhoods. Community memory focuses particularly upon increased student presence in the neighborhoods. Yet Ohio State’s own discourse seeks separation. It calls itself “a city within a city;”<sup>17</sup> University officials focus upon boundaries in their consideration of the community.<sup>18</sup> Taken together, these representations and mixed images characterize Ohio State’s place in the University District mythic chronology: a massive, inward-looking university, inconsiderate of its huge—and often negative—effects upon its surrounding

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<sup>14</sup> Ira Fink, “Community Relationships: The Ohio State University (Report): 1979. The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/054-V.F.), “Community Relationships: The Ohio State University (Report): 1979,” Accession 183/90.

<sup>15</sup> Recent images of Ohio State include a “bear in the woods” (Oral History Interview, R. Antonio Barno, January 2010), “elephant in a big room” (Oral History Interview, Dianne Efsic, September 2009) and “an 800 pound gorilla” (Oral History Interview, Eric Davies, July 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Asked about images of the University, more than one community member called forth metonymical images of student residents: “grills and cornhole boards” (Interview, Willie Young, July 2009) and “game day” (Leonette Lyles, Oral History Interview, July 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Jane Ware, “Big Campus,” *OSU News Digest*, August 26, 1988. The Ohio State University Archives, Information File, “Brief Facts: 1966-1994.”

<sup>18</sup> For example, in a letter (dated August 30, 1976) to Columbus mayor Tom Moody, then University president Harold Enarson illustrates this position in his opposition to a High Street development proposal: “The east side of High Street in the University area is admittedly an eyesore; but we do not believe that the answer to that problem is to erode the appearance of the west (campus) side of the street as well [...] We would also like to lend our strong support to some new thinking about the development of the City-University interface—particularly along High Street [...] The issues, I’m sure you agree, are important to both the City and the University.” The Ohio State University Archives, Harold L. Enarson Papers (RG 3/j/15/11), “Columbus, City of: High Street Development: 1976-77.”

neighborhoods. Even when recent University actors (purportedly) seek to deviate from these roles, they ground their explanations in the accepted chronology.<sup>19</sup>

When commentators today such as Fisher refer to the “golden days” of the University District, they illustrate a common recollection based upon the selective memories of certain people and upon historical experiences of particular blocks and streets in the District. Ann Fisher’s metaphors and imagery (from the article quoted above) join a long and colorful chronology of University District figurative language: of war,<sup>20</sup> animals<sup>21</sup>, entranceways,<sup>22</sup> and (as already discussed) trash. It relates to other recent newspaper articles that ask: “What’s a nice city like this doing with a district like that?” and “How (did the) streets of fine homes became city’s most hectic area?”<sup>23</sup> These memories and metaphors emphasize the creation of a single University District “rise and fall” narrative that assigns a single role to Ohio State’s interaction with the neighborhoods.

The University District’s twentieth century “story” is much more complex than this narrative allows. The difficulties of the chronology relate to the development of both the

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the chronology presented in this overview article. David Dixon, “Campus Partners and The Ohio State University: Transforming a Failing Commercial District,” *Places*, 17, no 1 (Spr 2005): 46-49.

<sup>20</sup> For example, David Lore and Ruth Hanley write that “Owner occupants in the district face a *never ending battle* to avoid being overrun by OSU students and rooming houses.” “Preservation is the Subject in University Area,” Off-Campus: Down but Not Out, *Columbus Dispatch*, November 18, 1985. In the same series, Lore and Hanley call the University District “a balkanized federation of crowded neighborhoods,” and quote Denis Laroche, a Columbus planner, on “refuse collection”: “I call it the war zone [...] It’s an ongoing battle up there.” Lore and Hanley, “What’s a nice city like this doing with a district like that?” (Off-Campus: Down but Not Out) *Columbus Dispatch*, November 17, 1985. Jim Nichols, in a 1994 press release, extended the martial metaphor to a Cold War and containment reference when he gave his version of the University’s twentieth century relationship to the University District: “High Street became sort of a Berlin Wall.” Alan D. Miller, “Task force to tackle restoration of neighborhood near OSU,” *Columbus Dispatch*, January 21, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> A 1960 Campus Planning document offers the characterization: “Rats, restaurants, and drive-ins!” as a label from the southwestern University District neighborhoods. The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/11), “City Planning Commission and University District Study: 1960-1964 (Folder 1 of 3.)”

<sup>22</sup> In 1994, OSU President Gordon Gee (during his first term) announced that, “This neighborhood is the front door to the Columbus campus.” “Ohio State to Support Improvement Plan for University Area.” Ohio State University press release (1-21-1994), Information File on University Area Improvement Task Force, The Ohio State University Archives. He echoed earlier University official William Griffith in 1979, who stated that “the area is on OSU’s doorstep.” William Griffith, Letter to William Vandament, May 1979. The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning and Space Utilization: Office of (RG 10/10/9), “South of Campus Area Study: 1979,” Accession 104/90.

<sup>23</sup> David Lore and Ruth Hanley, “Off-Campus: Down but not Out,” *Columbus Dispatch*. November 1985.

University District neighborhoods and Ohio State, to their growth, change, and interaction. During the “Golden Age,” the neighborhoods and the university were already experiencing physical growth and demographic change. On the few blocks and streets which did resemble the Golden Age “ideal” of single-family, “suburban,” houses occupied by homeowners, this ideal was fleeting and changing even at the time of its “rising.” The Golden Age myth is a limited snapshot of a few sections of a much larger District already defined and redefined by the encroaching university and the larger patterns of urban development in Columbus. Analysis of neighborhood change on selected, representative University District streets shows that this standard is not accurate, but is a powerful myth.

### **Sources and Methods**

This project encompassed quantitative and qualitative data, involved a variety of different sources, and used demographic, geographic, ethnographic, and historical methods. City directories contain occupational and demographic information about city residents organized by street address and by each resident’s name. I used Polk’s city directories for Columbus to track homeownership rates, occupational status, marital status, and persistence on the five sample streets. The 1920 and 1930 Census enumeration forms offer additional data (for example, age, race, and type of mortgage) about neighborhood residents. On certain blocks, I compared available Census data with the information from the city directories. In some cases, the Census forms corroborated the city directories and provided more information about the residents, such as the numbers of their family members and boarders. I also used the Census information to estimate density and transience in the earlier years of the study.

Campus, neighborhood, and city maps show physical changes and building at various points in time. I used campus maps from the OSU archive and the OSU Library’s Map Room to

study the physical expansion of the Ohio State University campus. I also looked at zoning and planning maps for both the university and the neighborhoods—and the written plans that often accompanied them. The 1920 Baist Property Atlas details the layout of the streets and homes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, available for both 1920 and 1952, offer information about the changing streets. They divide the streets by plat and show the physical layout of the street's structures. Present-day GIS maps of the streets allow for physical comparisons across time.

Physical changes can be observed in maps, photographs, and property records. I consulted Ohio Historic Inventory Forms for properties on the streets at the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. These forms, many of which were compiled as part of the University District Organization's 1999 study "Taking Stock," detail the architectural features and changes of specific properties. They often include photographs and explanations of any alterations done to the property.

As the University District neighborhoods changed, OSU's influence varied during the twentieth century. To study the involvement of the university in the neighborhoods, I searched the OSU archives for university documents, maps, and planning materials that relate to the University District neighborhoods. In particular, the internal correspondence and notes of various Ohio State administrative units were helpful to me; they discussed, analyzed, and summarized some of OSU officials' approaches to and attitudes about University District. The OSU Archive and the Columbus Metropolitan Library are also useful sources of newspaper clippings related to the University District and to Ohio State.

My data collection this also included oral history interviews and examination of oral history materials. The OSU Center for Folklore Studies is in the process of accessioning

University District oral histories. I examined summaries of these oral histories and interviewed residents, landlords, and University officials involved in the University District. Each person offers a different perspective on the neighborhood and their experiences in it, but common themes corroborate or challenge data from other sources. For example, one interviewee described the residents of E. Maynard Avenue in the 1970s as “indigents,” but occupational data from city directories does not support this characterization.<sup>24</sup>

There are not many secondary sources on Columbus, but the one which I found particularly useful was Roderick McKenzie’s “The Neighborhood: A Study of Local Life in the City of Columbus, Ohio.”<sup>25</sup> McKenzie, a student of Robert Park, analyzed neighborhoods, mobility, homeownership, and social life generally in Columbus. His maps, tables, and commentary provided a helpful source about the University District before World War II.

### **Neighborhood Change on Five University District Sample Streets**

I investigated the “Golden Age” myth through the experiences of five University District streets.<sup>26</sup> The differentiation, fragmentation, and layers of change on these different streets complicate the myth of a University District “Golden Age” and a “rise and fall” narrative for the District. Examined closely, the changes on the streets suggest a longer, more complex story of change. The “positive” and “negative” neighborhood characteristics do not fall neatly together on my streets and blocks. On certain blocks, several “positive” characteristics shifted to their “negative” counterparts over the course of the twentieth century. For example, some blocks with high homeownership and persistence gained renters and transients over the century. In some cases, the streets also felt the impact of Ohio State’s growth, expansion, and policy. However, on

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<sup>24</sup> Oral History interview with Wayne Garland. (July 2009)

<sup>25</sup> Roderick D. McKenzie, *The Neighborhood: A Study of Local life in the City of Columbus, Ohio*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1921).

<sup>26</sup> For the locations of these streets within the University District, see Map 4.

other blocks and streets, homeownership rates were never high or were never accompanied by residential persistence. Some blocks experienced few changes. Homeownership figures or persistence rates may have been consistent throughout the century. The experience of most of the sample blocks does *not* reflect a clear chronology of “positive” to “negative” neighborhood characteristics.

In general, the five sample streets suggest that the twentieth century experience of the University District was not singular but plural. The neighborhood characteristics and changes were as diverse in 1920 as they are in 2010, even in a geographically dense area of the district such as the one I studied. I selected five streets in the University District for comparative and representational purposes. Though the official limits of the University District include a larger area, I selected streets in the neighborhoods to the east of Ohio State and High Street. Three of my streets are part of the “predominantly student neighborhood” adjacent to OSU’s eastern boundary. One of these streets, E. 15<sup>th</sup>, is the traditional and symbolic entrance to campus. E. 15<sup>th</sup> was and is home to many of OSU’s fraternity and sorority student housing. The two others—East Frambes and Iuka Avenue—are in the northern section of the current student area. My other two streets—East Maynard and East Eleventh—are located several blocks to the north and south (respectively) of the “predominantly student neighborhood” and represent neighborhoods (Old North Columbus and Weinland Park) at once distinct from the university and connected to it. Three of my five streets run east-west from High Street to the railroad tracks that are the eastern boundary of the University District. The other two streets, taken together, stretch roughly the same distance. E. Frambes runs east-west but ends several blocks short of the railroad tracks. It ends near Iuka Avenue, which runs along the Iuka ravine at a slight northeast angle toward the railroad tracks.

Across the twentieth century, the blocks on these streets a changed in different ways. Some did not change as much as the Golden Age myth implies. Others changed in ways unaccounted for by the mythic chronology. Ohio State's interactions with the streets also varied. Neighbors today, for example, complain that Ohio State has focused too much upon the southeastern neighborhoods since the South Campus Gateway project and have neglected the northern neighborhoods. The effects of the University were similarly contradictory over the course of the twentieth century. As one resident noted, the University is "not a monolithic institution," and its impacts and neighborhood interactions were differential.<sup>27</sup> A critical examination of the Golden Age myth and the University District mythic chronology in the context of changes on individual streets reveals these complexities.

### **Homeownership and "Positive" Characteristics of the Golden Age Myth**

Homeownership is a prominent "positive" characteristic in both the Golden Age myth and in specific discussions of neighborhood characteristics and change. Homeownership was not *uncommon* in the University District during the first few decades of my study. However, it was neither common nor characteristic of the District between the 1920s and the early 1950s, as the Golden Age myth narrates. In fact, the opposite is true. On the one hand, there were certainly homeowners, and some of these homeowners lived in single family houses with their families. An early twentieth-century advertisement calls Indianola Forest "a region of home-owners," and this image fits with the Golden Age myth. On the other hand, this aspect of the myth is perhaps most clearly countered by my street-level homeownership data and by University District-wide Census statistics. I used city directory and Census data to tabulate block-by-block homeownership statistics in ten year intervals for my five sample streets. According to my data, the University District as a whole was never a "region of home-owners" if that tag implies that a

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<sup>27</sup> Oral History interview with Catherine Girves, July 7, 2009.



majority of household heads owned their homes. On my sample streets in 1940, 30 percent of the household heads were homeowners. Not only is this figure lower than community memory sometimes allows; it is lower than national and state averages. According to the 1940 US Census, 50 percent of Ohioans were homeowners that year.<sup>28</sup> Nationally, 43.6 percent of Americans owned their homes. The University District was a region of renters, even during its pre-WWII Golden Age.<sup>29</sup>

Community activists and university spokespersons consider low rates of homeownership to be a problem in the contemporary University District. Ohio State coursework, neighborhood organizations, and university-community development corporations have studied and reported on this issue and suggested solutions such as Campus Partners' faculty and staff homeownership initiative.<sup>30</sup> The 2000 US Census reported 12 percent owner-occupancy in the University District. This figure is lower than the homeownership rates on some of my blocks; but other blocks and streets have higher rates.<sup>31</sup> My aggregate figures account for 20 percent homeownership in 1991 and 28 percent total owner-occupancy on all of my streets between 1940 and 1991. Of course, aggregate homeownership figures hide and even distort the differentiation by block and street.

For example, a closer look at the 1940 street-level data reveals a range (from 3 percent homeownership rate on the easternmost block of E. 11<sup>th</sup> to a 100 percent homeownership rate on the second block of E. 15<sup>th</sup>) of different homeownership percentages on individual streets and

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<sup>28</sup> US Census Bureau, "Historical Census of Housing Tables: Homeownership," *Census of Housing*, <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/owner.html>>

<sup>29</sup> See Table 1 for aggregate homeownership figures for the five streets between 1940 and 1991. See tables 2.1-2.4 for homeownership figures by street between 1940-1991. Note: data are combined for Frambes and Iuka.

<sup>30</sup> For details, see <[www.campuspartners.osu.edu](http://www.campuspartners.osu.edu)>

<sup>31</sup> See again Tables 1 and 2 for homeownership totals in 1991.

blocks on these streets.<sup>32</sup> Some blocks were majority renter-occupied on streets characterized by closer overall percentages. Other streets and blocks were a mix of owner and renter occupied properties. On E. 15th Avenue, 48 percent of household heads were homeowners. This is the highest overall homeownership percentage on my five sample streets. E. 15th is four blocks long. Its westernmost block included the traditional entrance to campus. The least owner-occupied block of 15th, this block was 35 percent owner-occupied in 1940. 35 percent is higher than my overall figure for the District in 1940. However, this block of 15th was characterized by additional uses and residents not counted in the homeownership percentage. Its residents included the students who lived in the eleven different sororities and fraternities on the block. In addition to the Greek houses, Ohio State operated a dorm—Westminster Hall—which comprised three different buildings. A 1936 map of University District rooming houses (and rooming house occupancy rates) indicates two rooming houses on this block; each housed from five to nine students, the rooming house operator, and possibly, his or her family. There were seven commercial establishments, including a restaurant, beauty salon, doctor's office, dressmaker, architect's office, a photography studio, and a physician's office. The 48 percent average homeownership rate for the street masks the lower homeownership rate on this block. The lower rate, 35 percent, further masks the uncounted student residents of the block, who, counted as renters, would decrease the homeownership rate even more. Given this example, the aggregate University District homeownership rate of 30 percent for 1940 (and the 12 percent rate the US Census provides for 2000) are possibly misleading and should be reexamined critically.

In the same year, the other three (of the four total) blocks on 15<sup>th</sup> were more than 50 percent renter-occupied. In contrast, its second block (between Indianola Avenue and Summit

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<sup>32</sup> See Table 3 for homeownership figures by street in 1940. See tables 4.1-4.4 for homeownership figures by block and street in 1940.

Street) was 100 percent owner-occupied by upper middle class residents. Census data reveal a 100 percent owner-occupancy rate in 1920 as well. The 100 percent owner-occupancy figure in 1920 for the block on Fifteenth seems to support an image of a University District of non-student homeowners in residential, single family structures living in a neighborhood unconnected to the University. However, one property on this street, 165 E. Fifteenth, was home of the Beta Phi fraternity. By 1930, this same block contained eight fraternity and sorority houses. Attention fixed solely upon the high owner-occupancy figure overlooks the dynamic of coexisting student renters in Greek houses and homeowners with a longer chronology than the mythic story suggests. By 1940, when the block was still 100 percent owner-occupied, there were also eight Greek houses on the street. The number of homeowners had decreased from twenty-two in 1920 to thirteen in 1940. Increased renting density accompanied decreases in the total number of owners (and non-student residents) on the block. As this shift occurred, student presence on the street increased. At the same time, Ohio State's enrollment grew from 8,813 students in 1920 to 13,073 in 1940.<sup>33</sup>

Though it has never been typical of the District, homeownership in the University District historically has been considered a desirable goal. A 1938 advertisement for a home on "E. Maynard near 4th St" urges potential buyers to "own your own home at lower cost" and notes that "this is not a 'fancy' home, but is well-constructed, with large airy rooms and a nice yard and porch for the kiddies."<sup>34</sup> This ad targets "families" and "owner-occupants," but so have many University District advertisement campaigns. Data from the street show that if an owner

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<sup>33</sup> See Table 5 for OSU historical enrollment figures. Student Enrollment Reporting and Research Services, "Historical Enrollment," University Registrar, <<http://www.ureg.ohio-state.edu/ourweb/srs/srscontent/Historical%20Enrollment%5CAllHistorical%5CAllHistoricalENRindex.html>> For the sake of consistency, I use the enrollment figures provided by the "Historical Enrollment" section of the University Registrar's website for the years from my study. In my own searches for this information, I have found contradictory figures in other university sources, especially as methods for counting and reporting the numbers changed over the years.

<sup>34</sup> "Houses for Sale," source unknown, September 29, 1938.

did purchase this home, he or she would have been one of only a few owners on his or her block. In the two blocks of E. Maynard between Glenmawr and the railroad tracks, the area around the intersection of Maynard and 4th, there were eight homeowners and 33 renters in 1940. In other words, the advertisement urges ownership in an area less than 20 percent owner-occupied two years later. The advertisement does not imply high homeownership rates for this area. Yet there are various layers of the advertisement's possible contexts—the goals of local builders, national patterns of homeownership promotion after the Great Depression, and Maynard Avenue's (and the University District's) demographic patterns. These contexts show how an advertisement might not what the District actually was but what some parties wanted it to be or thought it should become.

In the previous decade, the 1930 Census accounts for 9 homeowners in this area, but it also shows additional renters. Some of these renters were not recorded in the city directories because they lived at the same address as household heads who were owners. For example, Charles Schwab, a machinist, lived at 489 Maynard with his wife. A homeowner, he shows up in the Census, but so does George Taylor, with his wife and his infant son, who rented at the same address. In this way, properties cannot easily be classified as “owner-occupied” or “renter-occupied.” Some were both renter and owner-occupied. Just as streets contained a mix of renters and owners, many individual properties were occupied by multiple families or household heads. My data show that there were some owners but mostly renters in this particular University District section. The advertisement shows that there were efforts to sell homes in the University District to homeowners (with families) in the 1930s. Neither the advertisement nor my data indicate homeownership as common in the University District or on Maynard Avenue at this time.

## Density, Transience, and “Negative” Characteristics of the University District’s Mythic “Decline”

The fixation upon homeownership in policy and planning connects with other neighborhood characteristics associated with the University District’s lost Golden Age. Discussions of density intersect with discussions of transience among the group of intertwined “negative” neighborhood qualities. Applied to the University District, these two characteristics are often associated with increased numbers of student renters in the neighborhoods. Today, high density and transience are cited as features that weaken the social fabric of the University District neighborhoods.

It is difficult to track residential persistence in ten year intervals on the University District streets I studied. In many cases, the dramatic lack of consistency from decade to decade attests to the relative transience of each streets’ residents. Sometimes, even within the same year, there were discrepancies between residents with the same addresses in the three sources I consulted for demographic information.<sup>35</sup> For example, on E. 15<sup>th</sup> in 1930, I note that, “Montgomery, F E is not listed as a resident of 15<sup>th</sup> in the alphabetic listing. He is listed as Montgomery F Edwin clk Practical Burial Slipper Co h3051 W Tulane rd. My guess is that he moved.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps for different reasons, neither renters nor homeowners were characterized by much residential persistence in the early years of my study.<sup>37</sup> However, by individual address, I did find that homeowners were more likely to persist across decades than renters. In other words, in the scattered cases of 20, 30, and even 40 years of persistence, the resident of the address often

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<sup>35</sup> I checked the city directory street by street sections, the city directory alphabetic section, and in some cases, the US Census for that year.

<sup>36</sup> “Notes, 15<sup>th</sup>, 1930.” These discrepancies within the city directories are common enough in my notes that I speculate a “lag” time between the collection of street-by-street data and the occupational and marital data listed in the alphabetical section. For example, on the same block that year, Louis Baker (resident of 435 15<sup>th</sup> in the street-by-street section) is listed as living on Neil Avenue in the alphabetical section.

<sup>37</sup> See Master Tables for the five sample streets.

owned his or her home. Sometimes, the persistence seems to have crossed generations, as houses perhaps passed from one family member to a younger one, a progression which would not have been possible (and attachment, perhaps, which would not have existed) in the case of renters.<sup>38</sup>

There were, however, notable cases of long-term persistence among renters.

If more common among homeowners, persistence was not limited to them. And, among homeowners, the percentage that persisted in ten year intervals was small. On Maynard Avenue's western sections, for example, addresses 1-200 had a persistence rate of 27 percent. Of 101 household heads, 27 persisted from 1940. Of the 27 persistent residents, 17 were homeowners. While "persistent homeowners" made up less than a quarter of the blocks' residents (17 percent), among "persistent householders," homeowners comprised 63 percent. To further complicate the associations, the same section of Maynard was 46 percent owner-occupied in 1950. Of its 95 addresses, 45 were owner-occupied (a high percentage, by University District standards). The majority of these homeowners (28, or 60 percent) were not persisting residents; they had bought their homes after 1940.<sup>39</sup>

Overall patterns for the District—on any street, in any year—of my study do not reveal high levels of persistence among any particular demographic group. The cases of persistence are notable—and perhaps, noticeable—because they are exceptions.<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to make a strong argument in the present for high levels of University District residential persistence, except in rare and anecdotal instances. The same is largely true for the period before WWII, or before the 1960s-1970s. A chronology of University District change does not include a "rise and fall" of persistence, or a sudden increase of transience.

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<sup>38</sup> See master data tables for each street.

<sup>39</sup> See persistence and homeownership tables for Maynard (Table 6).

<sup>40</sup> For example, on a block with high levels of transience in every year, Guyon Stearns is listed as the householder and owner for one address on E. 15<sup>th</sup> for every year of my study. (Presumably, Guyon Stearns had a son or relative with the same name.)

Like transience, density is also difficult to calculate exactly and to compare in the present and earlier in the period of study. Today, student transience and lack of reliable address data are challenges to accurate counts of students per street. In the 1920s and 1930s, the presence of “hidden residents”—those people who boarded or rented in the homes of enumerated household heads—is confirmed anecdotally by Census reports but difficult to count. Some of the hidden residents were students, the children, relatives, or boarders of enumerated household heads. Just as present-day students are often “packed” into houses, it appears that some properties in the early years of my study also housed substantial numbers of people. For example, one property on E. Eleventh, which appeared in the city directory as a single-family dwelling in 1920, was actually the home of 30 year-old Raymond Bull, a railroad conductor, who shared the house with his wife, son, his two daughters, his mother, his mother-in-law, his sister, his brother, and an unrelated 26 year old male boarder (an accountant).<sup>41</sup> Other examples of high density in University District properties are found in off-campus housing inspection reports of the OSU Men’s and Women’s Deans of Students’ Offices.<sup>42</sup> While related to university growth, present-day high density levels in the University District are not solely the result of increased numbers of students. My data show no historical prevalence of low density in the University District with which to contrast the present high density.

Sometimes *decreased* density of a certain demographic group, such as persistent owners, attracts attention to the street’s density shift. In other cases, the increased density of a group, such as students living in the University District, leads to notions of increases in University

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<sup>41</sup> 1920 Census enumeration sheets and 1920 city directory.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the Dean of Women encourages more on-campus housing for women in this 1923 petition: “The growth of the University has involved allowing students to live in too-crowded and substandard conditions. A major problem is that houses are advertised as suitable when they are not” (13). Similar reports and studies from the 1920s onward complain about overcrowded conditions in University District student boarding and rooming houses and apartments. Sawyer, Thomas C..*History of the Student Personnel Administration: 1873-1970*. The Ohio State Centennial Histories, Office of Student Affairs, Part I, Chapter 1, 1970.

District overall density. In particular, the dramatic *increase* of density (student and total) in the “student core neighborhood” might contribute to perceptions of significant increases of University District density.<sup>43</sup> This increased density is easy to observe on some University District streets, especially those which experienced an outbreak of multi-family apartments in the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> In this way, these perceptions of demographic change connect with perceptions of architectural change, particularly the focus upon “apartment-hotels,” zoning, and increased residential density in the middle decades of the twentieth century. University District housing code and density violations receive much rhetorical attention beginning in the 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

My data show that in general high level of density and transience were always characteristic of sections of the University District. Whereas the growth of OSU and increased numbers of student renters may have increased density and/or transience in certain sections, the shift was not from low to high density or from low to high transience.<sup>46</sup> Equations of increased student renters (or increased renters) with increased density and increased transience overlook the complexities of these relationships, which differed by block, street, and year. Connected causally with a “decline” of the University District, the associations reinforce the myth of “then” and “now.” They paint a false but powerful picture of a University District characterized by low-density, low-transience, high homeownership, and small numbers of student residents.

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<sup>43</sup> The area designated “student core neighborhood” includes the western sections of every street in my study except E. Maynard.

<sup>44</sup> 1960s and 1970s apartments built for the purpose of housing as many students as possible are apparent on E. Fifteenth and E. Frambes Avenues in this study, and to a lesser extent, on the westernmost blocks of E. Eleventh.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, *Document E5*, an eleven page annotated collage of parking and housing violations in the University District. It provides a hand-written definition of an “apartment-hotel” according to the zoning code: “A building arranged, intended, or designed to be occupied by five or more individuals or groups of individuals living independently but sharing a heating system and a general dining room.” It notes of one property that it is “not adequate for seven units,” and of another: “five parking spaces on site, two of which are occupied by trash cans.” There seem to have been a significant number of violations noted, and the annotations bear an exasperated tone.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, the block on E. 15<sup>th</sup> discussed earlier for its high ownership and persistence. This block also experienced a shift from low to high density as student renting increased.



## **Architectural and Demographic Characteristics, Myths, and Changes**

Demographic data do not support the myth of a University District of mostly homeowners in single family homes. Nor do the architectural features of many streets in the District, including some I studied. Although it varies by section, the extant housing stock in the University District neighborhoods includes significant numbers of multi-family buildings and row houses. A walk down the streets east of High in the geographic areas I sampled reveals brick row homes and brick and frame duplexes.<sup>47</sup> Many of these structures date from the early twentieth century, the same time from which many of the District's single-family houses date. Extant housing stock from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a mix of single and multi-family structures.

In community myth and memory, two general "types" of housing receive the most architectural attention: single family structures built in the early 1900s for middle and upper middle class residents and apartment buildings constructed in the early 1960s and 1970s and intended as off-campus housing for Ohio State students. This focus suggests that flimsy, high-density student housing replaced the sturdy single-family properties of the early twentieth century as a University District of families who owned these homes—and tended their gardens—"declined" into a district of student renters and transients packed together in poorly built "cinder-block" apartments and boarding houses.<sup>48</sup>

This narrative overlooks the fact that most (or, a great deal) of the housing stock in the University District—then and now—is neither grand single family homes or sixties and seventies apartments. There are many brick and frame duplexes, brick row homes, and smaller frame

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Figure 1, contemporary photographs of early twentieth century row homes on E. 11<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> "All those godawful apartments," was the characterization offered by one long-term resident I interviewed about the (in this case, architectural) effect of Ohio State upon her neighborhood. Oral History Interview with Dianne Efsic, September 2010. See also Figure 2, for photographs of 1960s-built multi-family housing on Frambes.

houses which date from between the late 1800s and 1920.<sup>49</sup> The same article which calls the University District a “region of homeowners” qualifies this description with a statement about the affordability of these homes. It emphasizes the affordability and modest size of the Indianola area housing stock: “Another charm of Indianola is that its beauty is the result of the cooperation of many families of modest means...There is no house in the community that could be called a mansion.”<sup>50</sup>

Even if one overlooks the numerous multi-family apartments which were built in the 1960s and 1970s before stricter code enforcement, the University District has the architectural characteristics of a “region of renters.” Many of these original architectural characteristics have made the District’s housing stock particularly conducive to student housing conversion and, on the southeastern sections of the District, attractive to developers of public housing. At the same time, particular demands created architectural modifications even though the original variety and diversity of the housing styles and stock led to and abetted a variety of uses, densities, and inhabitants.

Many of the larger single family properties—whether or not originally built as such—were attractive to pre-World War II rooming house operators, to OSU fraternities, sororities, and special interest groups, and later, to landlords who “chopped up” the larger dwellings into smaller student apartments. By style of dwelling, the University District seems to have long been a district of housing—and people—in flux. The story of twentieth century change is not as simple as a shift from homeowners to renters, or from single to multi-family dwellings.

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Figure 3, an Ohio Historic Inventory for 132 E. Maynard Avenue, which describes the frame property’s area as a “a neighborhood of similar sized generally non-descript. houses.”

<sup>50</sup> “What Nature and Man Have Done for Indianola,” *Columbus Dispatch*, Local, September 22, 1912.

For students, the row homes and duplexes on E. 11<sup>th</sup> and Maynard Avenues may have been better physical and economic fits than the larger properties on E. Frambes, E. 15<sup>th</sup>, and other streets geographically closer to the University, east of High Street. But proximity to the University and later, proximity to other student renters, seem to have been more important factors than type of housing. Student housing preferences (and changing preferences) dictated housing prices and patterns even in the 1920s. A 1924 M.A. thesis discusses connections between student choices, movement, and property values east of High:

The desirability of a neighborhood varies from time to time from the student point of view. Some years ago the district south of the campus, comprising West 11<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and Neil Avenues was most popular. Certain women, with the intention of making University rooming houses a business, bought property here at inflated prices. Then a little later most of the fraternities moved east of the campus and sorority houses as they came into existence wanted the east side. At present one of the first questions a girl student asks as she enquires about rooms in the Dean's office is, 'Have you anything east of High Street?' ...In all fairness one must say the east side is more attractive. The land is higher, the lots larger, and homes very much more modern and on the whole better built. In this very small desirable neighborhood, with University attendance constantly increasing, and new fraternities and sororities demanding houses each year, property values are soaring."<sup>51</sup>

The Golden Age mythic association of "stable" neighborhood characteristics—homeownership, persistence, low-density housing—with stable housing stock—unaltered, extant housing from the early twentieth century—is not accurate in most cases on my streets. While there are individual examples, properties that combine these traits, larger sections of the District do not support this kind of pattern. A consistently renter-occupied area is not necessarily less architecturally stable than one that was historically owner-occupied.

For example, some blocks with solid patterns of renter-occupancy experienced the *least* physical change of all the sample blocks. In the earlier years of my study, younger household

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<sup>51</sup> Jessica Foster, "The Housing of Women at Ohio State University," The Ohio State University: 1924. (9-10)

heads rented on the easternmost blocks of E. Eleventh.<sup>52</sup> A comparison of Baist property atlas maps, Sanborn fire insurance maps, and present-day GIS maps shows the physical transformations of the sample blocks, including this one. One of the most consistently renter-occupied sections in my study, the far eastern block of E. Eleventh, between N. 4<sup>th</sup> and the railroad tracks, is also one of the most intact physically in 2009. Over 80 percent renter-occupied every decade, this block experienced demographic changes unrelated to University student movements.<sup>53</sup>

Another block of Eleventh, discussed earlier for its higher owner-occupancy figures, experienced almost complete physical transformation over the course of the century. In 2009, only four properties on the block are intact from 1920. Like the mostly renter-occupied and unchanged block on Eleventh, this block also experienced little to no demographic impact from the university. Compared with the block on Fifteenth and with each other, these two blocks on Eleventh show the disparity among patterns of change on different blocks. Features of change such as homeownership, physical change, and increased student presence on a block are often unconnected and contradictory. Neither block on Eleventh experienced increased student presence. One was characterized by high (relative to data for Eleventh and University District aggregate figures ) owner-occupancy and physical change, the other high renter-occupancy and physical stability. Unlike the block on Fifteenth, neither fit the particular association of increased student presence, decreased owner-occupancy, and increased physical change.

### **The “Place” of Students in the University District: Myth, Imagery, and Associations**

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Tables 7.1-7.2 for a closer look at E. Eleventh in 1920. Table 7.1 gives average ages of household heads on 11<sup>th</sup> in 1920. Table 7.2 is an examination of the easternmost block of Eleventh: its physical stability and high renting rates.

<sup>53</sup> In fact, the block was over 90 percent renter-occupied every decade except 1960, when it was 84 percent renter-occupied.

Frequent themes in contemporary discourse about the University District, transience and density are often associated with students, and more specifically, with student renters in the University District. These students, who may live in the University District as undergraduates, might reside at a different address for each of his or her three undergraduate years after a mandatory first year in Ohio State residence halls. Even the most “persistent” undergraduate renters may reside at the same address for three or four years, a length of time which would not be noted in a decade-by-decade study such as mine. Ohio State’s proximity and the post-World War Two surge in its enrollment affected perceptions of students, student renters, and neighborhood “decline.”

Contemporary concerns about students living off-campus are not new. In 1938, Eugene Wiles noted that transience was a problem in the University District and among students who lived in boarding houses: “There is constant moving and changing among the men students which is unsatisfactory to the householder, to the student and to the University.”<sup>54</sup> In a 1957 annual report, Assistant Dean of Men and Director of Off-Campus Housing A.E. Hittepole expressed concern about the numbers of young, unsupervised men living in off-campus apartments and wrote, “There has been a trend during the past year for boys to go into apartments that are unsupervised, and many times very poor places for them to live. We again recommend that serious consideration be given to prohibit single men from living in apartments.”<sup>55</sup> Hittepole also suggested that University dormitories could solve the problem of

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<sup>54</sup> Willie Young, current OSU director of Off-Campus Student Services, attributes neighborhood instability to the age and attitudes of the college-aged University District residents he supervises: “It’s a transitional phase in life.” Interview with Willie Young, July 2009. “Housing Facilities of Men Students at Ohio State University, 1938” Wiles (11).

<sup>55</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, University Housing: Office of (RG 6/M/1), “Dean of Men’s Office: Annual Reports: 1957-1958.” June 1957 annual report by AE Hittepole (Assistant Dean of Men, director of Off-Campus Housing for Men).

unsupervised young renters in the University District.<sup>56</sup> A 1996 “Concept Document” published by OSU-affiliated Campus Partners articulates common perceptions about student residents of the University District and connects density, transience, and neighborhood “deterioration”: “Apparent lack of responsibility and respect for the community where students live while attending The Ohio State University is a precipitating factor in the deterioration of the University District with the highest *density* of student residents. Students present in the University District for a limited time, may view themselves as *transient* residents, and are often living independent of adult supervision for the first time.”<sup>57</sup> (italics added)

However, even for present-day student renters, the situation can be more complex. The mythic narrative focuses upon a particular and dramatic demographic change: increases in student enrollment and student renters. In doing so, it fails to take into account other changing neighborhood characteristics and demographic shifts. Some students may live in the University District after graduation. Not all University District renters in their twenties are Ohio State students. Whether or not they are OSU students, not all plan only to live in the University District temporarily. For example, one current, non-student, younger resident of E. 11<sup>th</sup> cited the “young energy of the neighborhood” as an attraction for young residents, in particular those who wish to live an alternative lifestyle or take advantage of the “youth, vibrancy, and creativity” of the University District.<sup>58</sup> The mythic emphasis upon one neighborhood dynamic—majority student renters on a street—overlooks or ignores other neighborhood dynamics: coexistent

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Campus Partners, *University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan Concept Document*, November 1998, 9-3. This section suggests that community service programs “may foster a stronger sense of ownership and investment in the community leading to increased responsibility and respect for the permanent residents, property.” The section also suggests that future initiatives focus upon the “special needs of a high density, young adult population.”

<sup>58</sup> He was referring specifically to what he called a “hipster liberaldom” lifestyle, which he also called “punk” at several points during the interview. Oral history interview with Miles Curtiss, a thirty-year-old who lives at 237 E. 11<sup>th</sup>. July 2009.

students *and* owner-occupants, students *as* owner-occupants, and non-traditional (married or graduate) student residents.

In the earlier years of my study, similar complexity characterized University District demographics. In 1921, Roderick McKenzie, an urban sociologist studying Columbus, noted near constant changes in the residents of Columbus' peripheral city neighborhoods such as those in the University District. He predicted further outward shifting to streetcar suburbs such as Bexley, Upper Arlington, and Marblecliff, not increases in the center.<sup>59</sup> In addition, demographic transitions occurred immediately before and during World War II as well as after. One example of a non-student transition was the movement of wartime industrial workers into the University District, a shift documented and observed at the time by OSU Dean of Men Joseph Park. He wrote: "In 1942 the enrollment of men began to decrease rapidly, the dormitories were turned over to the Army and Navy, fraternity houses were closed, used to house women or army personnel, and an influx of war-workers and service personnel came to Columbus. Rooming house and apartment operators were anxious to rent to them because they paid higher rents and were twelve-month residents, and because student demand was at its lowest."<sup>60</sup> Park's observation is important because not only does it note a non-student demographic shift before the end of World War Two but because it also notes the presence of student renters and boarders—and University District private facilities and buildings that catered to them—*before* WWII and the student enrollment increase. The end of WWII, then, did not mean the sudden *introduction* of student renters to the University District but rather the return and increase of student renters.

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<sup>59</sup> Roderick D. McKenzie, *The Neighborhood: A Study of Local life in the City of Columbus, Ohio*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1921).

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Park, "The Housing of Men Students." (1945) The Ohio State University Archives, University Housing: Office of (RG 6/m/2), "Housing Reports and Studies: 1938-1951."

## **Between Campus and Community: Community and Neighborhood Organizations**

University District student residents are limited to an oversimplified “role” in the mythic narrative. When the University District mythic narrative mentions individual University District *non-student* residents at all, it “casts” them as respondents to University encroachment and policy. When it discusses various University District neighborhood organizations and associations, they play a role as respondents to the “decline” of the District. Whether battling University expansion and neighborhood change in the 1960s or forming partnerships to fight crime in the 2000s, the “U-groups” are usually mentioned in association with Ohio State. Yet organization in general, was a phenomenon which was particularly common to the University District in the earliest decades of the twentieth century, even before the mythic “decline” of the University District.

A 1912 newspaper article describes the formation of the Indianola Improvement Association and gives this description of the group: “The Indianola dwellers appreciate their blessings and intend by every means to perpetuate and enhance them. With these ends in view, the Indianola Improvement Association has been organized[...]There is a monthly meeting[...]at the school house for the transaction of business, and it is hoped to have addresses presented upon problems of interest to the society.”<sup>61</sup> In the same period, McKenzie discusses five organized streets in Columbus in the 1910s: “In addition to the local improvement associations [...] several streets have formed organizations to promote the interests of the residents on a single street or city block [...] As far as can be ascertained these local organizations are all confined to the northern and western sections of the city, regions which are comparatively new, and for the most part occupied by home-owners.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> “What Man and Nature Have Done for Indianola”

<sup>62</sup> McKenzie (354)



Of the five organized streets McKenzie discusses, four were located within the present-day boundaries of the University District: Northwood Avenue, Oakland Avenue, W. Ninth Avenue, and Glenmawr Avenue. McKenzie notes that Oakland, Northwood, and Glenmawr all organized to “promote street beautification,” but all did so for different reasons. Residents of Northwood were concerned about property values, residents of Oakland wanted to win a prize during the city’s centennial celebration, and residents of Glenmawr organized in order to protest the city’s neglect of its grassy median and to urge the city to pass aesthetic improvement ordinances. West 9<sup>th</sup>, on the other hand, organized responses to perceived outside threats: “The street has persistently acted as a unit to keep its western vista over the university farm free from obstruction. It has also had several experiments in cooperate action in fighting the intrusion of objectionable structures within its units.”<sup>63</sup> The examples of these early University District neighborhood organizations show the diverse reasons for collective neighborhood action. Over 40 years later, when the largest contemporary University District neighborhood associations formed, the residents who started the associations acted accordingly. In the same year that residents founded the University Community Association (1961), they brought parking violations in the University District to the attention of city regulators.<sup>64</sup>

Based on the results of his study, McKenzie suggested in the early twentieth century that the organized University District streets above were more stable than those surrounding them.<sup>65</sup> However, Michael Sutcliffe used Columbus neighborhoods as a case study for the geography of neighborhood activism, argued in part that less “stable” neighborhoods were more likely to experience concentrated activism; in other words, that neighborhoods experiencing change also

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/14), “University District Study: Implementation: 1961, 1964-66, 1969.”

<sup>65</sup> He cites higher homeownership rates, enforced physical uniformity, and “lower” levels of transience. Ibid.

had higher concentrations of neighborhood activism.<sup>66</sup> In his effort to map socio-historical changes over the twentieth century, Sutcliffe notes that activism became “more intense, more exclusionary, more concentrated in space.” He connects “the defensive and exclusionary character of post-1960s activism resulted from concerns expressed by activists with the protection of specifically their homes [...] from external threats. These threats arose from the form of urban development taking place during this period.” Sutcliffe includes the building of “multi-family residences” as perceived threats.<sup>67</sup>

Mythically conceived as responses to negative patterns of change, neighborhood associations existed in the University District before (according to the Golden Age myth) the negative characteristics emerged. Residents on Oakland Avenue in the 1910s worried about transience and property values and tried to instill a sense of community. These are some of same concerns and objectives of contemporary neighborhood organizations. Residents of W. 9<sup>th</sup> hoped to prevent physical encroachment on their street (via disruption of their vista). Reactions to University building and encroachment drove some organizations’ actions in the 1960s. Residents of Glenmawr came together to plan a new park. Residents and members of neighborhood organizations (under the UDO umbrella) partnered with the city of Columbus Planning Department to produce Plan 38, a University District neighborhood plan. Protection of perceived positive characteristics, defense against perceived outside threats (such as those of Ohio State’s urban renewal project), and general action to improve neighborhood characteristics (to add green space, for example) are all patterns of reasons for neighborhood organization and association in the University District.

### **The University District’s Mythic Chronology: Past, Present, and Future**

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<sup>66</sup> Sutcliffe, Michael, “Neighborhood Activism in Sociohistorical Perspective: Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1980,” Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University (Phd thesis), 1985.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 51.

In the 1960s and 1970s (and in the present), neighborhood activism looked to the past, to the present, and to the future. Residents and organizations sought both to restore a past ideal, the Golden Age myth. They responded to perceived present threats and reacted to the supposed future uncertainty or decline. They did act as respondents to University action, but they were more than reactive; they were active and proactive. They sought to protect perceived “stable” neighborhood characteristics, such as non-student homeowners and to “fight” perceived “unstable” or “negative” neighborhood characteristics. In the 1960s and 1970s, students symbolized a threat to the “positive” characteristics. Riots, protests, and martial law—and increased student enrollment and presence in the neighborhoods—reinforced residents’ associations of students with neighborhood instability.

The image of numerous, anonymous students—packed into crowded houses, moving or graduating every year—dominates historical and contemporary perceptions.<sup>68</sup> To non-student University District residents and organizations, this image represented both contemporary danger, the possibility of future “decline,” and the loss of a past ideal. These associations frame the University District mythic chronology and resonate in the present. A recent newspaper article connects student density and transience to a general list of neighborhood problems including “crime, graffiti, panhandling, garbage and lousy housing.” It suggests: “The density of students living in the area is a major driver of these problems.”<sup>69</sup> The article’s fuzzy causal groupings associate student density and transience with fragmentation and the absence of “neighborhood identity.” The article (and the individual neighborhood and University activists quoted within) endorse homeownership as a positive counterpoint to these negative qualities; it connects

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<sup>68</sup> “I can’t tell them apart,” one non-student resident on a street complained to me. “They all wear red sweatshirts and carry backpacks.” (Ohio State’s school colors are scarlet and gray).

<sup>69</sup> Dan McKeever, “‘A disposable neighborhood’ Part 3: University District in need of a distinct identity”, *The Lantern*, Monday, May 25, 2009.

neighborhood identity and stability with homeownership. Though confusing to parse, these associations follow familiar University District metonymic paradigms. According to the article's implicit logic, "density" and "transience" substitute for "renters" and "student renters." While "homeowners" imply "stability," "density" and "transience" are connected with "instability" and "fragmentation."

Other images and events affected residents' perceptions of students in the University District. The "place" of students in the mythic chronology hinges upon student protests on campus in the 1960s and 1970s and riots in the University District. The riots, called also "disturbances," that occurred in the High Street vicinity in 1970 and 1971 are often blurred in memory and discourse with student protests both at Ohio State and nationally during these decades. These riots stemmed from escalations of conflicts between people at High Street bars, responses by the Columbus police to the conflicts, and reactions of bystanders, those involved, and the wider university and city communities. The riots also resulted in the disturbances of everyday life in the University District (for example, the curfew and increased police presence) and at Ohio State (involvement and arrest of students; the actions that took place at the Ohio Union). Negative images of student residents in the University District and perceptions of gaps between student residents and non-student residents are tied to these riots, which are also critical polarizing events in the mythic narrative of the decline of the University District.

A recent oral history project sponsored by Ohio State's Center for Folklore Studies interviewed long-term residents about University District change. The subject of "riots" was a recurring theme in the conversations, and students were specifically instructed to ask the long-term residents about the riots.<sup>70</sup> The focus upon the drama of these events is rooted in imagery and emotion surrounding the riots. A 1970 headline from the *Ohio State Lantern* screams,

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<sup>70</sup> Accessions and indexes, University District Oral Histories, OSU Center for Folklore Studies

“Violence, Gas, Fire Bombs.” A photograph of a police officer with knee knockers accompanies the caption “combat zone” in a 1971 *Columbus Dispatch* article.<sup>71</sup> Tear gas clouds are shown in another photograph beneath the article. The martial imagery and language accord with the mythic theme of the “fight” to prevent the “decline” of the University District (in the 1960s and 1970s) and later, the “battle” to redevelop the District (in the 1990s.)

However, the “place” of students in the University District is complex. The 1970s riots did not spark the first attempts at evaluations of the role of students in the University District, student residents as neighbors, or Ohio State’s responsibilities (if any) for students living off-campus. Concerns about student life off-campus recur in Ohio State’s discourse throughout the twentieth century and often precipitate, frame, or rationalize Ohio State’s involvement in the neighborhoods. In this way, students play the role of the University’s only (perceived) extensions east of High Street. They are seen as constituents or customers for whose well-being the University is responsible (or caters to), but whose effects are outside the control or domain of the University. A 1971 *Columbus Dispatch* article differentiates between “students” (who live in the University District) and University District “street people.” It argues that the 1971 High Street riots were started by “street people”—who, the article notes, are also sources of drug use and dealing—and not students.<sup>72</sup> The article dissociates Ohio State students from both rioting and drug use. Its breakdown of University District residents (OSU students and “street people”) is congruent with OSU perceptions of the University District neighborhoods. These categories resonate with later OSU policies that privilege and focus upon the safety of OSU students and allow University dissociation from issues perceived to be those of “the street.”

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<sup>71</sup> “Persons Involved in Area Rioting Arrested on a Variety of Charges,” *Columbus Dispatch*, November 6, 1971.

<sup>72</sup> Gerald Tebben, “Nonstudents Spark Riot Tagged OSU’S” *Columbus Dispatch*, November 6, 1971.

In an oral history interview, University District resident and social worker mentioned Ohio State's more recent dissociations from University District issues such as drug use and traffic. According to the interviewee's perception, OSU student involvement in the dealing and purchase of drugs in the Weinland Park neighborhood—a crucial factor in the continued “drug problems” associated with that neighborhood—is ignored by the University, which perceives (and portrays) the problem to be entirely that of non-student residents of the neighborhood.<sup>73</sup> In the example from the 1970s, while some discourse (for example, the *Columbus Dispatch* article) separates students from drug use, other discourse associates students with illegal drug paraphernalia and with the creation of a market for such items. A 1974 newspaper article which calls High Street a “young people's market” describes the “head shops...in dilapidated storefronts” along High Street. Young people (mentioned as students in the article) are connected with both architectural and economic change, and also with drug use.<sup>74</sup> Counter-cultural lifestyles, then and now, further separate student residents both from the University and from non-student residents. They contribute to the mixed images and perceptions—such as the drug paraphernalia described in the article above—of student residents of the University District.

Just as a mixed set of images were associated with students in the chronology, students themselves were part of a larger set of perceived threats. In the mythic chronology of a University District “rise and fall,” the 1960s and 1970s are seen as the points at which the decline became more rapid and dramatic. Residents remember the decades as a period of uncontrolled, negative change in the neighborhoods. Lack of city building regulations, increased high-density construction, decreased homeownership, student riots, rising parking and trash problems, and increasingly high general neighborhood instability are all claimed as different

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<sup>73</sup> Oral history interview with Robert Caldwell, July 2009.

<sup>74</sup> George DeVault, “ ‘Head Shops’ Keep On Top of Market,” *Columbus Dispatch*, 10-25-1974.

negative characteristics exacerbated or emergent in this period of “fall.” Neighborhood residents and organizations acted to curb these threats, to protect stability, and to restore a Golden Age. The convergence of these concerns secured the periods’ pivotal place in contemporary discourse as a “breaking point” or period of “decline.”

A recently published pictorial survey of the University District epitomizes the selective community memory of these decades. A chapter entitled, “Revolutions and Resolutions” calls the 1960s and 1970s “two decades of difficult times.” That chapter focuses upon “fights” between students and university administration, and between Ohio State and the University District. It draws on martial metaphors to describe the relationships and interactions between Ohio State and the University District neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations. Notably, the introduction to the previous chapter (“Opportunities for All”) states, “There still were symbiotic relationships between the neighborhoods and educational, industrial, and business systems that were located in the district.”<sup>75</sup> The deictic “still” indicates the perception of an impending change, or, in this case, “fall” from the “Golden Age” of “opportunities for all.” Paradoxically, some of these opportunities, associated with the GI Bill, were also tied to the perceived “decline” of the University District due to increased student presence and (implicitly) federal mortgage opportunities in the suburbs.<sup>76</sup> Symbiotic or not, Ohio State and the University District were inseparably linked to the larger patterns of national change and urban development.<sup>77</sup>

### **Between Campus and Community: Conflicts**

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<sup>75</sup> Doreen N. Uhas Sauer and Stuart J. Koblentz on behalf of the University District Organization, *The Ohio State University Neighborhoods*. Images of America. Charleston, SC.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> Altschuler, Glenn, and Stuart Blumin. *The GI Bill: The New Deal for Veterans (Pivotal Moments in American History)*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of metropolitan Columbus in the context of national urban development (including annexation and zoning), suburbanization, and planning, see Diane Burgess, *Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1994.

These selective memories (and myths) are also responses to changes and reactions to University expansion, policies, and public relations. Responses to real changes in the neighborhoods, the memories are grounded in the events, emotions, and conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s. During these decades, there were changes and conflicts at the local and national levels, at Ohio State, and in the University District. In Columbus, as in a number of United States cities in the 1960s and 1970s, city and university expansion projects used eminent domain and urban renewal to initiate development projects in nearby neighborhoods. The University of Pennsylvania destroyed, developed, and expanded into surrounding working-class neighborhoods in West Philadelphia in the 1960s. In *The University and Urban Renewal*, former president Judith Rodin describes Penn's controversial urban renewal efforts.<sup>78</sup> In *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*, Margaret Pugh O'Mara discusses Penn's attempts to counter perceived urban blight and to redevelop West Philadelphia into "University City."<sup>79</sup>

In the same period, the University of Pittsburgh's expansion in the Oakland area provoked neighborhood opposition and forced the university to form community relations organizations.<sup>80</sup> Columbia University's history of land acquisition in New York City also led to conflicts with surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>81</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, Ohio State and the city of

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<sup>78</sup> Judith Rodin, *The University and Urban Revival: Out of the Ivory Tower and Into the Streets*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 23.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) 156-166.

<sup>80</sup> Sabina Deitrick and Tracy Soska, "The University of Pittsburgh and the Oakland Neighborhood: From Conflict to Cooperation, or How the 800-Pound Gorilla Learned to Sit with—and not on—Its Neighbors," *The University as Urban Developer: Case Studies and Analyses*, David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel eds., (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 25-42.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Marcuse and Cuz Potter, "Columbia University's Heights: An Ivory Tower and Its Communities," *The University as Urban Developer: Case Studies and Analyses*, David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel eds., (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 45-63.



Columbus sponsored an urban renewal project north of Ohio State's campus.<sup>82</sup> Beginning in the late 1950s, the University and city worked together to declare blighted, purchase, and raze several streets in the University District just north of Ohio State's northern campus border.<sup>83</sup> These actions drew criticism from University District residents and neighborhood associations.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Ohio State's campus and neighborhood planning and renewal initiatives prompted suspicion and dissent among University District residents and landlords.<sup>84</sup> The 1962-65 fight and community backlash over Harold Zieg's Lane Terrace apartment building epitomizes the conflicts, complexities, and interactions that characterized the project. Newspaper articles from this period chronicle the story of the apartment building, newly constructed as off-campus student housing at the time of the project. Internal correspondence from the Ohio State University archives shows the response of OSU actors to the problem of the apartment building. It could not be declared "substandard" (because it was newly built) and could not be demolished with the justification of the need for more student housing (because it already housed students).<sup>85</sup> Further, the OSU plans for the renewal area called for the site of the apartment to become green space, not housing.

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<sup>82</sup> The Ohio State North Dorms project used urban renewal to declare a section of the University District blighted and redevelop the land for student dormitories. For more information, see the Ohio State University Office of Campus Planning and Space Utilization accessions in the Ohio State University Archives and Library. In particular, for a detailed summary of Ohio State's land acquisitions and land acquisition policy in this period (between 1956 and 1969), see "The Ohio State University Land Acquisition Policy and Procedures: 1969," The Ohio State University, Campus Planning and Space Utilization: Office of (RG 10/6/3), Accession 92/91.

<sup>83</sup> See Maps 5-6 of OSU campus prior to North Dorms urban renewal project. Before the project, OSU's campus ended at Woodruff Avenue to the north. See Maps 7 of OSU campus just after the project. See Map 8 for OSU campus in 2009.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, a letter sent from Eileen Ryan Jones to Columbus Mayor M.E. Sensenbrenner about Ryan's suspicion of the Columbus Planning Commission and OSU Office of Campus Planning's University District preliminary plan (May 1964). The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/11), "City Planning Commission and University District Study: 1960-1964 (Folder 2 of 3)."

<sup>85</sup> A true urgency about student housing permeates the public and private rhetoric and writing of OSU actors about this project. For example, in 1964, one OSU official commented to a campus planner: "property acquisition is troublesome, but we have the larger problem of how we house students." The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/26), "Urban Renewal: OSU North: 1964-1966." Letter from Gordon Carson to James Clark (February 1964) about the schedule of building for the north dorms that urges expedition of building.

Ohio State officials and planners attempted to distance the university from the Zieg case specifically and from the urban renewal process more generally. Though the University worked closely with city officials in what both parties referred to as a “gentleman’s agreement,” Ohio State public relations material about these issues routinely cast all responsibility for the project upon the city of Columbus.<sup>86</sup> Planners and administrators deeply involved in the urban renewal process and influential at local, state, and federal levels used the double shield of the city government (which purchased the land for the project) and the federal government which sponsored and created the process. In a memo, OSU head planner John Herrick explained the official position to a co-worker who was corresponding with Zieg: “since it is the city and not the University that acquires and clears the land in an urban renewal project, the decision on the Zieg property will be made in City Hall,” and “we are asking our Board of Trustees to say that they will buy from the city whatever land the city decides to acquire and clear.” He concluded: “You were truthful in what you said to Mr. Zieg [...] and I do not see how subsequent decisions made by the City of Columbus can be the basis for fair accusations that you have been uncooperative or have reneged on a promise. *We have not and do not propose to take Mr. Zieg’s apartment, but if the city should acquire and clear the property we should of course buy it when it is made available for resale.*”<sup>87</sup> (italics added).

Just as Ohio State diffused actual responsibility for the project and its controversies, University District residents directed their confusion, anger, and blame at multiple parties. Letter

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<sup>86</sup> A letter from the ME Sensenbrenner (Mayor, City of Columbus) and Patrick Phelan (Director, Department of Urban Renewal, City of Columbus) to Novice Fawcett (OSU President) and John Herrick (Executive Director of Campus Planning). The letters iterates a “gentleman’s agreement” between the City and the University, promises that the pooling credits will be used in the University district, and that the City “will take full account of the fact that these credits would not exist except for the past and continuing capital improvements program of the University. The letter includes other platitudes directed toward the University by the City. (February 1965)

<sup>87</sup> A letter to Gordon Carson (Office of Business and Finance) from John Herrick from May 1962. The letter is in response to questions about the Zieg apartment on N. High Street and its inclusion in the urban renewal plan. He writes, “This apartment was specifically excluded from acquisition in the development plan,” The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning, Office of (RG 10/26), “Urban Renewal: OSU North: 1962.”

writers and lawsuits implicate the federal government, the city of Columbus, and Ohio State. University District resident Charles Pavey implored the Ohio State Board of Trustees to consider the urban project as an ethical breach: “This is, I am sorry to say, patently dishonest. This is not a blighted area and it is not a slum and [...] it hardly sets a good example for the University itself to adopt a philosophy that the end justifies the means. Certainly one of the objectives of higher education should be to cultivate and develop the highest possible ethical sense in students and it could hardly be said that this present course of action creates a good precept.”<sup>88</sup>

Other residents questioned the government’s role in urban renewal. A *Columbus Dispatch* editorial letter from 1965 was titled, ““Urban Renewal is More Federal Control.” It asked, “why are people’s property rights violated in the guise of ‘urban renewal?’ [...] I can only feel grief when I think of several of my neighbors (on Lane Avenue—campus area) who lived in their particular homes for 20-30 years, and had beautiful homes—houses that couldn’t be duplicated [...] One dear neighbor who lost his wife (during the four years of proceedings) almost lost his sanity at being ‘put out’ of his own home.”<sup>89</sup>

In addition to ethical and civic questions, community members wondered about building inspections and physical determinants of “blight” and “substandard” housing.<sup>90</sup> Political cartoons imagined the University planners as drug-users and endowed them with a spray can of “instant blight.” The Zieg Lane Terrace apartment, once razed, was replaced by the “Lane Terrace Ghost,” which was still referenced (and drawn floating above the new construction sites.)

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<sup>88</sup> Letter from Charles Pavey to the Board of Trustees of OSU (June 1964).

<sup>89</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/26), “Urban Renewal: Projects: OSU North: Improvements: 1964-66.”

*Document W22*: “Urban Renewal is More Federal Control.” Letter to the editor from “Mrs. D.A.” *Booster* (3/31/1965).

<sup>90</sup> *Document W27*: “Letters to the Editor: There’s More to the Renewal Story.” *Booster* (8/12/1965). Letter by Arthur Young (W. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue) critical of urban renewal. Quote: “By means of rigged inspections, any area can be declared substandard and ready for the bulldozer.”

The reactions and responses of University District residents differed. Some residents were angry about the University's actions. Other University affiliates and residents were offended by this anger. R.I. Boughton Jr., an OSU student who gave his address on W. Lane Avenue, attacked the *Herald* (a University District newspaper) and area property owners for *not* supporting the urban renewal projects. He wrote, "I think it is about time that the property owners of this area open their eyes to the fact that university's gain, is, in the long run, their gain. Certainly they must realize that they are already deriving great economic benefits from the university's presence, not only in the added business, but also in the rental of their substandard slums to the overflow crop of students that Ohio State attracts."

The equation of University and neighborhood interests, the divisions drawn between student renters and property owners, and concerns about University District student housing quality are themes that recur throughout the twentieth century discourses of University actors. For example, a 1923 petition by the Dean of Women for student dormitories contains the complaint: "The growth of the University has involved allowing students to live in too-crowded and substandard conditions. A major problem is that houses are advertised as suitable when they are not."<sup>91</sup> Ohio State concerns about student housing, discussed earlier, are particularly frequent and urgent in the late 1950s (during the urban renewal process). In a 1959 report on off-campus housing, Lowell Wrigley expresses hope that the university's building project will force property owners to maintain their properties. Referencing a student's carbon monoxide death, he wrote:

"I made an inspection of a rooming house on Chittenden Avenue...We found one heater which was giving off so much carbon monoxide that if a person were to remain in the room for an hour without adequate ventilation he would become deathly sick, [...]We are not permitted to make inspections unless invited in, yet most of the apartments I have visited for one reason or another have been dirty, almost to the point of being filthy. Because there is no requirement of cleanliness... this condition will continue to exist. The

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<sup>91</sup> 13, Sawyer, Thomas C. *History of the Student Personnel Administration: 1873-1970*. The Ohio State Centennial Histories, Office of Student Affairs, Part I, Chapter 1, 1970.

people who rent the apartments, and in some cases they use the word very loosely, seem to be primarily interested in the income, with no responsibility.”<sup>92</sup>

The urgency adopted by the student affairs staff after the carbon monoxide death—and the choice of carbon monoxide as a dramatic marker of substandard and unsafe student housing—connect to recent Ohio State concerns about student safety in the University District neighborhoods. The 1994 death of an OSU student near High Street became the rallying point behind a “renewed” university interest in the University District neighborhoods.<sup>93</sup> Among the results of this involvement was the creation of Campus Partners, a University-affiliated urban redevelopment organization, and the building of the South Campus Gateway, an “off-campus” mixed commercial and residential development owned by Ohio State through Campus Partners.

### **The University as Neighbor: OSU Involvement and Expansion in the University District**

After Ohio State’s North Dorms urban renewal project, residents associated certain neighborhood changes with the University’s actions and expansion. Some nearby streets experienced decreased owner-occupancy rates and increased numbers of student renters after this project. As a result, some perceptions assume that most other University District streets experienced similar demographic and physical changes after the university’s growth and expansion in the 1960s. At the same time, other streets’ stable owner-occupancy figures and physically intact housing stock contradict this association.<sup>94</sup> The third (easternmost) block of Frambes was 91 percent owner-occupied in 1960, the year the Ohio State University began its North Dorms urban renewal expansion project. Of the 20 owners on the block, 13 persisted from 1950. By 1970, there was one vacant property on the block and three student houses. One property, 155 E. Frambes, had been subdivided into four student apartments. The block was 69

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<sup>92</sup> Lowell Wrigley (Assistant Dean of Men) “Off-Campus Housing, 1958-59.” The Ohio State University Archives, University Housing: Office Of (RG 6/m/1), “Dean of Men’s Office: Annual Report: 1958-1959.”

<sup>93</sup> For an example of this explanation, see Terry Pristin, “COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE; Improving the Neighborhood at Ohio State.” The New York Times. April 30, 2003.

<sup>94</sup> See master tables for E. Frambes and E. Maynard Avenues.

percent owner-occupied by 16 owners, 12 of whom persisted from 1960 and 6 of whom persisted from 1950.<sup>95</sup> The trend for this block of Frambes is characterized by decreasing owners, decreasing persistence, and increasing student presence after 1960.

These changes are particularly dramatic because of they were simultaneous with Ohio State's expansion project. The demographic and physical changes occurred as residents reacted to and remembered the OSU actions in the urban renewal project. The western half of Frambes was one of the streets razed during the urban renewal project. However, the social dynamic of long term owners living next door to students also highlighted the changes on this block. When older non-student residents, including persistent owners, witnessed the physical changes and increased transience of a student renting influx, they magnified and polarized the block's noticeable changes into "then and now," "rise and fall," and "us and them." Ohio State's controversial renewal project joined larger patterns of urban development as the neighborhoods and the university changed. Causally conflated, these combinations of changes became powerful frameworks for a mythic narrative of decline and negative University impact upon the District.

Ohio State's involvement in the University District neighborhoods has been multi-faceted and complex. Partly as a response to earlier mistakes, in the 1990s, many universities changed their strategies toward community relationships. New questions about the role, impact, and effectiveness of university outreach, service-learning, and institutional civic investments are emerging. Rodin describes the efforts of the University of Pennsylvania to reach out to the neighborhoods around Penn's campus with economic and social initiatives. Other institutions are reevaluating their roles as neighbors and civic actors.<sup>96</sup> In 1995, Ohio State created an

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<sup>95</sup> See data tables and block-by-block descriptions of E. Frambes (block 3) for more details.

<sup>96</sup> For example, in, "The University of Pittsburgh and the Oakland Neighborhood: From Conflict to Cooperation, or How the 800-Pound Gorilla Learned to Sit with—and not on—Its Neighbors," Deitrick and Soska bring up the

organization called Campus Partners for Community Urban Redevelopment, the result of a task force recommendation for University District improvement and of President Gee's goal for greater university involvement in the adjacent neighborhoods.<sup>97</sup> Sponsored and executed by Campus Partners, the 2005 South Campus Gateway project has been one of the most visible and controversial university building projects in the University District.<sup>98</sup> Another example of off-campus university expansion, the Gateway has not increased the number of student renters in the far eastern blocks of its nearby streets nor has it decreased or altered consistently low owner-occupancy percentages in this area.<sup>99</sup> While recent, this pattern contrasts with the experiences of the streets adjacent to the 1960s North Dorms project.<sup>100</sup>

Although the mythic chronology perceives Ohio State as an oblivious or intentionally "bad" neighbor unaware of its large impact, there are numerous instances of attempts at self-examination in the OSU Archives. In a report on the 1970 High Street riot, the Office of Student Affairs wrote, "We believe there are sincere efforts being made to develop a sense of 'community' in the University area. Several projects are underway to coalesce this area and improve conditions for its residents, many of whom are students. Because this community has

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question of the civic role of public institutions. They also emphasize the changes in university planning approaches over the second half of the twentieth century, toward a nominal "collaborative planning" model.

<sup>97</sup> For more information, see Campus Partners' website: [www.campuspartners.osu.edu](http://www.campuspartners.osu.edu)

<sup>98</sup> The South Campus Gateway Project, enabled by eminent domain seizures and real estate acquisition in the low-income Weinland Park section of the University District, is a mixed-use commercial, residential, and entertainment complex owned and operated by Campus Partners. For background, see also David Dixon, "Campus Partners and The Ohio State University: Transforming a Failing Commercial District." *Places* 17.1 (2005): 46-49.

<sup>99</sup> I refer to E. Eleventh Avenue, located in the low-income Weinland Park neighborhood of the University District. The far eastern sections of E. Eleventh have consistently low figures for owner-occupancy, student presence, and physical change throughout the twentieth century. The Gateway project has affected student presence and physical change in the western sections of E. Eleventh but not its eastern blocks, some sections of which contain city of Columbus Section-8 housing.

<sup>100</sup> I refer again to E. Frambes Avenue, which experienced increased student presence, decreased owner-occupancy, and physical change after the North Dorms urban renewal project and the razing of its western section. W. Frambes Avenue. These patterns of change are still discussed as emblematic of university influence on the University District neighborhoods, as in a recent talk about OSU community relations. Emily Foster, "Town/Gown Relations from the East Side of High Street," "Neighborhood Institute," OSU Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, George Wells Knight House, 10/26/2009.

many unique needs and special problems, the University, as a ‘resident,’ must examine the nature of its relationship and responsibilities to this community...The University must engage in an active, self-reflective effort to define the nature and extent of its relationship to the community.”<sup>101</sup>

Sometimes, however, the boundary between the campus and the community was blurred, uncertain, and inconsistent. As it attempted to define its relationship, to a large extent, the University delineated its responsibilities by defining (and sometimes revising) its borders. In an off-campus study from the 1970s, an OSU administrator stated: “The master plan [...] has generally used a ‘hard-edge’ (‘this is OSU’s turf—that’s your turf’) approach in defining campus boundaries. This has been in part dictated by following street lines.”<sup>102</sup> In 1980, an Ohio State official echoed this approach when he told a southwest University District resident concerned about physical damage to his street by Columbus city buses that, “‘I suggested [...] that he might want to contact the City Engineer about the bus traffic on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue since it is a City street not a University street. I also added that the matter is probably not a University concern *since it is not our street.*”<sup>103</sup> (italics added) This particular interaction involved an Ohio State official, an Ohio State campus planner, city of Columbus bus traffic, and a University District neighborhood association (NECKO). Ohio State defines its relationship to the problem by denying ownership or possession. The street does not ‘belong’ to the university, so it is “‘probably not a University concern.”

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<sup>101</sup> The Ohio State University Office of Student Affairs, “Report on the High Street Disturbance,” 1971.

<sup>102</sup> May 1979 letter from William J. Griffith to William E. Vandament The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning and Space Utilization: Office of (RG 10/10/9), “South of Campus Area Study: 1979,” Accession 104/90.

<sup>103</sup> May 1980 memo from William Griffith to Jean Hansford. It refers to complaints made to COTA by NECKO resident Steve Hewitt about bus traffic on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning and Space Utilization: Office of (RG 10/6/9), “King-Eighth Neighborhood Group (NECKO: 1977-1982,” Accession 104/90.



However, in 1962, the University had responded to criticism about the North Dorms project with an explanation that extended University involvement to off-campus streets. OSU planner James Clark wrote that, “It (the North Dorms urban renewal area) has been *considered throughout the study as part of the campus* because of the fact that the area was west of High Street and south of Lane Avenue, both of which seem to be good boundary streets.”<sup>104</sup> (italics added) These contradictory cases show a simultaneous creation and destruction of boundaries.

In 1965, perhaps in response to public relations backlash from the North Dorms urban renewal project, Ohio State defined its borders: “A major refinement of the master plan for the main campus occurred in 1965 when a very precise boundary was drawn for University land acquisition. It [...] removed any questions about the exact limits of University expansion.”<sup>105</sup> The same document notes that if Ohio State acquired neighborhood properties, it should enact physical improvements in order to “set a good example for other property owners.” The relationship between Ohio State and the neighborhoods implied here is also “Ohio State as neighborhood property owner.”

Ohio State’s planners drew these borders in an area that had never been defined by official boundaries. Maps of the University District’s “official” borders are common by the mid-1960s but largely nonexistent before then. Earlier maps are arranged by Census ward; for example, in 1920, the present-day University District included parts of Census wards 13, 15, and 16.<sup>106</sup> In a 1953 map of Columbus industrial areas, the metropolitan area is split into five

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<sup>104</sup> A memo from James Clark to Don Denison in 1962 addresses Phase II of the Campus Planning Study. He writes, “in our Ohio State University campus planning study Phase II, which was adopted [...] February 16 as a guide for the future of the campus, no neighborhood or area surrounding the campus includes the project area. It has been considered throughout the study as part of the campus because of the fact that the area was west of High Street and south of Lane Avenue, both of which seem to be good boundary streets.” The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning, Office of (RG 10/26), “Urban Renewal: OSU North: 1962.”

<sup>105</sup> The Ohio State University, Campus Planning and Space Utilization: Office of (RG 10/6/3), “The Ohio State University Land Acquisition Policy and Procedures: 1969,” Accession 92/91.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, McKenzie.

sections; the University District is part of “North” Columbus, an area that is described as “the large tract between Alum Creek, on the east, and the Olentangy, on the west, lying north of Downtown Columbus and the east-west railroad lines and extending to Granville Road.” <sup>107</sup>

Yet by the 1960s, documents and discourse from the City, the university, and neighborhood improvement organizations clearly defined the University District’s boundaries. In the early 1970s, during the student riots, riot law reinforced them. A 1971 newspaper article that mentions the curfew gives the present-day University District’s boundaries as those of the curfew but does not mention the University in the description: “It includes the area bounded by the Olentangy River, to the Penn-Central Railroad and Fifth-av to Hudson-st.” <sup>108</sup> In the late 1950s and through the 1960s, Ohio State and the City of Columbus Planning Department, sometimes working together, created “studies” and “plans” about and for the University District, delineated by now with official borders. In the 1960s and 1970s, the newly created “U-groups” made neighborhood plans and sponsored studies as well. <sup>109</sup> One product of these interests and processes was the OSU master plans in the 1950s and 1960s. This plan is a document notable for its lack of attention to the neighborhoods surrounding campus, particularly those east of High Street. <sup>110</sup> The plan’s maps and text end at High Street, but other city and neighborhood plans discuss the neighborhoods east of High.

A desire to make plans for the University District and the University has continued throughout the twentieth century. Campus Partners and its associated groups have created “plans” for the University District, for High Street, and for the Weinland Park neighborhood.

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<sup>107</sup> Hunker, Henry L, “Industrial Evolution of Columbus Ohio,” Bureau of Business Research, College of Commerce and Administration, The Ohio State University: Columbus, OH, 1958. (67)

<sup>108</sup> “Students, Faculty Patrol; Crowds Dwindle,” Columbus Dispatch

<sup>109</sup> “Profile of the University Community Part III” prepared by the University District Organization in April 1973. The Ohio State University Archives, Harold L. Enarson Papers (RG 3/j/43/5), “University District Organization: April 1973.”

<sup>110</sup> Caudill, Rowlett, Scott, “Campus Planning Study for the Ohio State University,” Houston, TX. : Caudill, Rowlett, and Scott, 1959

Though it acknowledges the work and mission of Campus Partners in the University District neighborhoods, a recent Ohio State campus “master planning” process focuses upon the Olentangy River (the University District’s western border) as a new center and feature of the Ohio State campus, an objective which shifts the university further from its eastern bordering neighborhoods. The desire to “plan” the University District shows a struggle over space.

Ohio State’s planning efforts in the mid-twentieth century were outwardly focused. Planners were concerned about other universities and their physical expansion, on-campus housing, and planning efforts. For example, in 1958, OSU planners made inquiries of sixty-nine colleges and universities around the country to ask if and how the institution had produced a master plan. Later, the planners sent each responding school a copy of Ohio State’s completed plan.<sup>111</sup> Ohio State officials were concerned about fitting into the national context of campus planning. They were also interested in the possibilities and national examples of the use of urban renewal for expansion. The University, through head planner James Clark, also participated in the 1961 conference “The University and the City—Planning and Urban Renewal” at Wayne State University.<sup>112</sup>

For its part, the City of Columbus explored interactions between town and gown through a national survey of cities and urban universities. Harold Buchanon, the Columbus Director of City Planning, wrote to a number of cities.<sup>113</sup> He asked the following questions: “What are the

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<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the file of letters and responses the office kept (and charts they made). The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/15), “Correspondence: Campus Long-Range Planning Programs from Other Universities and Colleges: 1958-1961.”

<sup>112</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office of (RG 10/6/15), “Correspondence: Campus Long-Range Planning Programs from Other Universities and Colleges: 1958-1961.” (IBID, for now)

<sup>113</sup> He wrote to Atlanta (Georgia Tech), Berkeley (University of California), Cambridge (Harvard and MIT), Evanston (Northwestern), Knoxville (University of Tennessee), Los Angeles (UCLA), Minneapolis (University of Minnesota), Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), Seattle (University of Washington), and Tucson (University of Arizona). Summary of Pertinent Statements Received From A University-Housing Questionnaire.” Written by Harold Buchanon (Director, City Planning Commission, Columbus) in February 1963. The Ohio State University

future goals of the university neighborhood? What in general should a university neighborhood be?” “What problems are created by student housing? It is the responsibility of the City or university to set standards for students?” “What percent of students live on and off campus? Does the University plan to house a certain percent on campus? Is there special housing for faculty, graduate students, and married students?” “Does the Faculty live in the University Neighborhood where most of the students live?” “What are student rent rates for rooms, apartments, and dormitories on and off campus?” “What is the trend for social and professional fraternities and sororities? Should their housing be grouped or scattered?”<sup>114</sup> These solicitations show a struggle to understand “what a university neighborhood should be,” a desire to place Columbus and Ohio State within a national context (and perhaps, to emulate national patterns), and a search for solutions to perceived city and university problems, particularly those of housing.

In this same period, the OSU planners hired an outside firm to study the University District in a separate plan, itself acknowledged as an afterthought, the product of hasty compliance with the federal government’s urban renewal requirements. This document, a “preliminary study of the university neighborhood” had a threefold purpose: to identify problems, to suggest solutions, and “to suggest proposals for guiding both *the expansion of the campus, and therefore development and redevelopment of the neighborhoods toward a continually improving University and residential environment.*” (italics added). The plan offers a synthesis of Ohio State’s influence upon the neighborhoods. The associations are similar to those drawn by University District residents and neighborhood organizations:

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Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/11), “City Planning Commission and University District Study: 1960-1964 (Folder 1 of 3.)”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

“The growth of the University has created an economic demand for more business and dwelling units immediately surrounding the campus. This has resulted in conversion from single family homes to multiple dwelling and commercial uses. This increased density has resulted in overcrowding, excessive vehicular traffic, and strip commercial development; all blighting factors. Maintenance has declined. A further element of uncertainty within the neighborhoods is caused by the knowledge that the OSU campus must expand, but when, where, and how far?”<sup>115</sup>

Here, the planners offer architectural change and increased density as evidence of “blight.” OSU planners who annotated and commented upon the preliminary study draw separations between student renters and “people living in the community.” Implicitly, they posit a gap between the “University community” (comprised of non-student residents in lower density housing) and students, who (as OSU planner James Clark notes) “cannot maintain ‘normal’ social and family life with neighbors.”<sup>116</sup> The OSU planners and the outside plan alternately discuss high density and construction of higher density housing as inevitable *and* cite these processes as major problems. Perceived by residents, explicated (but accepted) by planners, the perception of inevitable “decline” joins the myth of a downward “fall” from the Golden Age.

Even as the University planned for the “improvement” of the neighborhoods, University District and Columbus residents also developed images of the University’s role in the “decline.” They contrasted a myth of former “symbiotic” relationships between the University and the community with new imagery. Reactions to the urban renewal project include the image of the University as an aggressive taker and owner of land. An OSU proposal in the late 1960s to use urban renewal credits in the southwestern University District never succeeded.<sup>117</sup> Noting opposition by a neighborhood organization, SCCA (South Campus Area Association), OSU

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<sup>115</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/11), “City Planning Commission and University District Study: 1960-1964 (Folder 1 of 3.)”

<sup>116</sup> The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/11), “City Planning Commission and University District Study: 1960-1964 (Folder 1 of 3.)” Clark wrote the following question in the margin of the plan, ““Do the people living in the community *want* social intercourse with the students?””

<sup>117</sup> For more information on the Homestead urban renewal proposal, see The Ohio State University Archives, Campus Planning: Office Of (RG 10/6/26), “Urban Renewal: Projects: Area South of Campus: 1962, 1966-68, 1970.”

planner Jean Hansford wrote, “The major problem is citizen participation and cooperation because the last attempt in this area was killed by accusations of ‘land-grabbing,’ and the like.”

<sup>118</sup> The echoes of an unsuccessful restraining order against the North Dorms Urban Renewal project reverberate here and in the present. According to a quote from the case’s attorney in the *Columbus Dispatch*, the 1964 lawsuit alleged that, “the area in the OSU North project is not blighted but that the renewal project is a subterfuge or conspiracy to obtain the land for OSU.” <sup>119</sup> Residents’ perceptions of University “land-grabbing” and “subterfuge” still sometimes underlie present University actions in the UD neighborhoods.

But Ohio State officials (such as Clark and the other OSU planners), permanent residents involved in neighborhood organizations, appointed university-community liaisons, and large-scale landlords all tell different stories of neighborhood change and university impact upon the neighborhoods. <sup>120</sup> For example, in the 1960s, did these “blighted”—high-density and multi-family housing—conditions *force* Ohio State to “get involved” in the neighborhoods? On certain streets, did decreased owner-occupancy mandate urban renewal for elimination of the “blight” of (student?) renters? <sup>121</sup> Or did Ohio State’s enrollment growth create the “blighted” conditions along with an increased presence of student renters? <sup>122</sup> In this case, “blight” becomes a symbol or image used by diverse parties to describe perceptions of neighborhood change.

## Reevaluations and Conclusions

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, a memorandum written by Jean Hansford (November 1968).

<sup>119</sup> “OSU North Restrainer is Slated.” *Columbus Dispatch* (7/12/1964).

<sup>120</sup> See the Center for Folklore Studies’ University District oral history interviews. My own oral history interviews also illustrate these different perspectives.

<sup>121</sup> See “Data and Analysis” section for an elaboration upon this pattern and its powerful connotations.

<sup>122</sup> Some neighborhood residents see the spread of student housing as a kind of “blight” that infects streets farther and farther from campus. (See oral history interviews) But the university, in policy and planning documents from the middle of the twentieth century, defines “blight” differently and seeks to protect *students* from its spread. (See annotated bibliography of OSU Archives sources).

In fact, the picture that emerges from my data (on many, but not all of the blocks and streets I studied) is *not* of a University District of a homogenously residential, single family, low density, owner-occupied buildings with gardens carefully tended by persistent residents, often OSU faculty and staff, and their families (and occasionally, the unobtrusive student). Instead, the University District—in the decades remembered as its “Golden Age”—seems to have been a medium to high density district occupied by families but also by single workers, widows, rooming house operators, and significant numbers of OSU students. It was a district of renters, many of whom lived in “multi-family” buildings, in particular, the row homes and duplexes that are common in the neighborhoods. Though some were long-term residents of the same property, many of the District’s residents had not lived at their current addresses for even ten years.

Notable numbers worked and lived at the same address. Sometimes “homeowners” operated boardinghouses. An “owner-occupied” home did not necessarily indicate the presence of (only) a single family. A head of household who owned his or her home and lived in it with his or her immediate family might have also rented space in the building to students or other individuals. Even “owner-occupied” properties (as indicated by city directory or Census classification) might have been densely occupied “multi-family” buildings or “student rentals.” Available sources support this possibility, even during the “Golden Age” of “family” homeownership in the University District.

It is true that later decades of the twentieth century saw increases in the number of addresses on most of the streets I studied. In other words, “multi-family housing” and density increased (in some cases, dramatically) on certain blocks during the middle decades of the twentieth century. However, even during the earlier years of my study, the subdivision of properties in the University District was not uncommon. Furthermore, sometimes properties

were not subdivided for multiple residences but for multiple purposes. Mixed-use (residential and commercial) addresses were found amid residential-only properties.

Accounts of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the 1920s include student parades and relay races down the street.<sup>123</sup> To say that 15<sup>th</sup> was unaffected by student life would be to ignore these noisy parades.

<sup>124</sup> Sections of the District farther away from campus were quieter and may have experienced lower numbers of student residents than they currently do. But even in 1920, students lived on all five streets I studied. In pre-1950s annual reports about off-campus housing, OSU student-support officials complained of crowded conditions, parties and dancing in the University District boardinghouses at night, and of restaurants serving innutritious food to students en masse. In fact, University officials worried that off-campus housing conditions would negatively affect parents' decisions to send their children to OSU.<sup>125</sup> They worried about the off-campus living environments of students and the university's role in off-campus housing.

### **New Questions and Old Questions**

During an oral history interview, R. Antonio Barno talked about the relationship between Ohio State and the University District neighborhoods, and rhetoric about "community": "A lot of people talk about 'community,' and I think they're lying to themselves. People are just living next door to each other but having no relationship." Ohio State cannot be a neighborhood without relationships, without considering itself as an invested member of a community. Perhaps it would do well to consider its own—and others'—historic insistence upon higher rates of owner-occupancy in the U.D. Owners, the mythic reasoning goes, are more invested in their

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<sup>123</sup> Doreen N. Uhas Sauer and Stuart J. Koblentz on behalf of the University District Organization, *The Ohio State University Neighborhoods*. Images of America. Charleston, SC.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> It would also be to ignore the sorority, fraternity, and student rooming houses present on 15<sup>th</sup> and Iuka in the 1920s (Jessica Foster, "The Housing of Women at Ohio State University," Masters Thesis, The Ohio State University: 1924) and present on every street studied except Maynard by the mid-1930s. (Wiles, Eugene O, "The Housing of Men Students at Ohio State University, 1936," Masters Thesis, The Ohio State University: 1936.)

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



neighborhoods, their houses, and their streets. Is insistence on the need for homeownership a deflection of its own institutional “ownership?” This “ownership” does not need to encompass an entire set of neighborhoods, to plan for their uses, to decide upon their condition of “blight” or their potential for redevelopment.

How can an examination of changing rhetoric contribute to a study of neighborhood change and university roles in neighborhood change? How do myths and patterns of individual memories and perceptions reflect and connect to neighborhood change and university roles in neighborhood change? Further, how do present-day issues and policies connect to historical responses to change? How do historical responses to neighborhood change resonate and reappear in the present?